

And so she wedded Blue-beard — like a wise and wily spider  
 He had lured into his web the wished-for, silly little fly!  
 And, before the honeymoon was gone, one day he stood beside her,  
 And with oily words of sorrow, but with evil in his eye,  
 Said his business for a month or more would call him to a distance,  
 And he must leave her — sorry to — but then, she must not cry!

He bade her have her friends, as many as she liked, about her,  
 And handed her a jingling bunch of something, saying, “ These  
 Will open vaults and cellars and the heavy iron boxes  
 Where all my gold and jewels are, or any door you please.  
 Go where you like, do what you will, one single thing excepted !”  
 And here he took a little key from out the bunch of keys.

“ This will unlock the closet at the end of the long passage,  
 But that you must not enter! I forbid it!” — and he frowned.  
 So she promised that she would not, and he went upon his journey.  
 And no sooner was he gone than all her merry friends around  
 Came to visit her, and made the dim old corridors and chambers  
 With their silken dresses whisper, with laugh and song resound.

Up and down the oaken stairways flitted dainty-footed ladies,  
 Lighting up the shadowy twilight with the lustre of their bloom;  
 Like the varied sunlight streaming through an old cathedral window  
 Went their brightness glancing through the unaccustomed gloom,  
 But Blue-beard’s wife was restless, and a strong desire possessed her  
 Through it all to get a single peep at that forbidden room.

And so one day she slipped away from all her guests, unnoted,  
 Down through the lower passage, till she reached the fatal door,  
 Put in the key and turned the lock, and gently pushed it open —  
 But, oh the horrid sight that met her eyes! Upon the floor  
 There were blood-stains dark and dreadful, and like dresses in a wardrobe,  
 There were women hung up by their hair, and dripping in their gore!